

## Steps to Success: Naturalistic and Focused Assessment

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Linda Warren: Once mentor-coaches and protégés have identified assessment questions, mentor-coaches can continue to support their protégés in a number of ways. They can help protégés be clear and consistent about what information to collect and when to collect it. They can help protégés use appropriate milestones for language and early literacy skills for infants and toddlers.

They can encourage protégés to use the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework as a guide for instruction and skill levels and activities. They can help protégés recognize that by observing children's play, adults gain insight into their development and ideas for supporting their development of new skills. There are many ways to record ongoing assessment information. Carol and Susan, what methods do you and your protégés use to collect information?

Carol Bellamy: My protégés, we use things like collecting art samples, writing samples, taking dictation of the child's conversation. We also take photographs of the children in action. Something I devised though that works really well is -- it's a little unique -- I have my protégés taking notes for the whole group. If they're in the block area, I tell them to write down every child that's in that area and everything that they see going on.

And, and in turn, their assistant can take notes if they're in another area. Say if they're in the art area, they can take notes and write down every child that's in that area and everything that they see, and then they can exchange that information. You can see a full picture of all of the children at one time.

Linda: That's very interesting. So you have these whole group or whole small groups in areas and what's occurring in the different areas. So you're share -- so it's sort of sharing of stories. Carol: Exactly. Linda: Good. Susan, would you like to add to that?

Susan Fordice: I think that's a a a a great way to also the sharing the stories to help it to be a more efficient process. And when I think about Carol's having her own locally designed way of doing it, it reminds me that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to collecting observations. I have six different teachers in my, in my setting, and they all have their own ways that are useful and meaningful to them for collecting information.

I think as a mentor-coach, I need to give them guidelines and some parameters to work within, but I need to always keep in mind that if it's meaningful to them and it's user-friendly to them, they're more apt to do it. So I like to try to let them experiment around and find what works for them so that they'll be sure and just do it on an ongoing basis.

Linda: Good, I think that, you know, you both added an interesting perspective and really are illustrating that there is variation in the kinds of assessment methods that are used in Head Start and it's okay that there is no "one size fits all" approach. Thank you. Okay, let's look now at two approaches to assessment. One is naturalistic and the other is focused. In naturalistic assessment, the teacher observes a child engaged in a child-selected activity. Naturalistic assessment focuses on the child and the child's usual interests and activities.

It is completed with a child-centered focus. The interaction or observation between the adult and child follows the child's lead and capitalizes on the child's interests. As in the observation we saw in the video with Susan and Sandy, naturalistic assessment and observational methods are often invisible to the child. The child continues the activity with no awareness that an adult is observing and assessing. This is an effective approach for assessing children at any age. Focused assessment occurs during a planned activity because the teacher's goal is to observe a child's progress or ability level in a particular area.

The adult guides the interactions to directly elicit the skills targeted for observation. To plan a focused assessment, the mentor-coach and protégé decide on the environment, materials and strategies to elicit the behavior they want to

assess. Both naturalistic and focused assessments occur in authentic situations such as play or daily classroom routines. Now we are going back to Massachusetts to see a mentor-coach, Elizabeth, and her protégé, also Elizabeth, talk about a naturalistic assessment and plan their next steps.

[Video begins] Elizabeth Osche: Amy, I know. Amy and Please Baby Please yesterday, as I was leaving she was getting the book out.

Elizabeth Lincoln: Yeah she was getting all set up with it, it was really neat. I was reading to another kid and she was playing with her babies and she was playing with her books. And she went over and got her baby and decided that the baby was too tired to be awake any more. So she went and got the little pink basket that's right here and she got the baby and she went back and got the pillow and she went back and got the blanket. And then she said to me "I need to go get a chair." So I said "Well, what do you need a chair for?" And she said, "I'm gonna sit and read to my baby."

So she walked right over to the table and picked up a chair and carried it back over to the rug and sat down on it and got the book "Please Baby Please" out and opened it up and started reading. And she didn't read the exact language, she didn't read the exact words but she read what the picture was saying to her so her first one was "not time to play baby, you have to go back to your home" which is what the babies do when the baby's awake and the words say "Go back to bed baby please baby please." And that was the part that she always fixed in on, she always said "baby" repeatedly just like the words do.

Elizabeth Osche: Please baby or baby baby baby. Elizabeth Lincoln: Right, or not on your head baby when she's eating her cereal and dumps it on her head. Elizabeth Osche: Yep. Elizabeth Lincoln: And at that one she laughed and got off the chair and brought it over to show me to say "look, look what I see here." Elizabeth Osche: The cereal on her head.

Elizabeth Lincoln: And she went through pretty much the whole thing. Well, one thing I - things I noticed about Amy is that every time she comes in in the morning, after she takes her coat off and hangs up her stuff, her dad says, "Let's go pick out a book." And they sit down together and read a book and then he says goodbye. So not only does that help her in the morning with saying goodbye, but it shows that books are something that have been important to them at home.

Elizabeth Osche: Yeah, I noticed also other books they really like with the repetition. She was reading this book also the other day and doing the same thing with just one of the songs that we sing at circle time. But she was quacking like the duck and, you know, turning around and finding all the different, you know, whatever the animals said and singing you know, the song, you know, If You're Happy and You Know It, which she has memorized from circle time, that it was great that she then connected it to the book that that we have in the classroom.

Elizabeth Lincoln: Well, I wonder what else we could do with that to bring it in the classroom more – other repetitive books or what have you. Elizabeth Osche: Yeah, probably I know some of the other songbooks that we have... Elizabeth Lincoln: And I noticed this morning that monster book that we brought in that has only been there for a few days that they were reading.

Elizabeth Osche: Oh with the, Go Away Green Monster? Elizabeth Lincoln: Yeah, the Go Away Green Monster book that they had already picked up on in less than a week – the rhythm of it. Elizabeth Osche: Yep, and that's good too cause it has the rhythm of first adding each piece of the monster and then taking away each piece of the monster. Elizabeth Lincoln: Right. [Music, video ends]

Linda: Because that assessment recorded by Elizabeth was child centered and authentic, it is a good example of the naturalistic approach. Amy's spontaneous behaviors gave both Elizabeths the information they needed to ask questions and plan next steps. Take some time to discuss naturalistic assessment with your facilitator. Stop the tape now. We will see you again at the conclusion of your discussions.

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-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000380-Steps+to+Success+Unit+4+Clip+5-Naturalistic+and+Focused+Assessment-2007-SD360p/fd24f5061f158S4f9cOaf1df3a142fa4beb1>